



Universities have a key role in thinking about the "solutions for tomorrow", said Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Grace Fu. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

NUS forms research, urban design tie-up with CapitaLand Development

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A National University of Singapore (NUS) interdisciplinary research centre, NUS Cities, and real estate developer CapitaLand Development (CLD) are set to work together on research and programmes relating to urban planning and design.

Under the partnership, announced on Aug 26, NUS Cities and CLD will collaborate on three fronts – awareness and engagement programmes for the public, academic research, as well as sponsorship and capacity-building opportunities.

NUS said the two entities will work on solutions for complex urban challenges, such as improving urban liveability, decarbonisation, health and wellness.

It added that the research could involve case studies from CLD's portfolio of developments, which include CapitaSpring, which has been recognised for promoting health and well-being through features such as an open-air garden that mimics a tropical rainforest.

NUS Cities director Khoo Teng Chye said the collaboration will support the centre in its mission to create an open and inclusive platform for education, research and advisory services.

CLD chief executive Jonathan Yap said the two parties will work towards the environmental and social well-being of communities, by leveraging synergies of CLD's real estate expertise and NUS' research prowess.

The collaboration was announced at an NUS Cities event that featured a panel discussion on green buildings and public health.

Moderated by Dr Lam Khee Poh, the provost's chair professor of architecture and the built environment at NUS, the panel discussion featured Minister for Sustainability and the Environment Grace Fu, Singapore Green Building Council president Lee Ang Seng, Housing Board deputy chief executive Johnny Wong and CLD's head of sustainability Giovanni Cossu.

The panellists said there has been increasing interest in green buildings in recent years, with Mr Lee noting that there has been an "unprecedented focus on green buildings" in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

He attributed this to increased awareness of how air quality in indoor environments may impact building occupants' health – something that green buildings that are naturally ventilated can address.

Mr Cossu said the market for "wellness real estate" is growing, with developers and building users increasingly interested in how buildings can be designed to promote physical, psychological and emotional health.

Giving the example of the increasing adoption of wellness certification for buildings across the world, he believes the demand for healthy design will grow in the coming years.

Ms Fu, who cited the clean-up of the Singapore River in the 1970s and 1980s as an example of Singapore's commitment to public health, said new challenges that threaten public health will emerge.

Citing Singapore's plan to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, amid climate change and global warming, she said universities have a key role in leading education and thinking about the "solutions for tomorrow".

"If the country has to decarbonise by 2050, we need solutions now. And the universities have this important, critical role of showing us the way to go, the pathway to take," she said.

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